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INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1530
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5017
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8612
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6181
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1844
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4037
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2000
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 000744

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA,S NLD UNCLES AND CHARGE DISCUSS THE STATE OF
PLAY

REF: A. RANGOON 725

[B](#). RANGOON 724

[C](#). RANGOON 734

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Classified By: P/E Chief Jennifer Harhigh for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) During a useful meeting September 17 with Charge, leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD) confirmed Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) has resumed receiving food deliveries. Thus, the NLD is no longer concerned about her health. The Uncles are pessimistic about ASSK's pending legal appeal, noting it requires receipt of documents from the GOB to go forward. NLD officials said they are awaiting electoral legislation, including the political party registration law, in order to decide next steps for the 2010 elections, but they implied a boycott by condemning the regime's constitution as unacceptable. Party leaders explained their dissatisfaction with the Gambari mission while saying they would welcome a visit by SYG Ban, even without pre-conditions, since they have long urged a higher level of international attention to Burma's political impasse. NLD leaders expressed appreciation for scholarships the American Center provides students but raised concerns about new application procedures. Charge explained that the new procedures aim to increase transparency and equity in decision-making, but are not expected to reduce NLD students' fair share of scholarships. END SUMMARY.

ASSK'S HEALTH OK; PESSIMISM REGARDING HER APPEAL

2. (C) CDA held his first meeting with top NLD leaders, including two NLD Central Executive Committee (CEC) members (aka "Uncles"), Party Chair Aung Shwe and Nyunt Wai, and NLD spokesman Nyan Win, September 17 at NLD Headquarters in Rangoon (the party's only legal operating office). NLD chair Aung Shwe said that although NLD leaders had been concerned about ASSK's health, she is "all right now" and has accepted food three times since September 15. Aung Shwe added that

ASSK's lawyer, Neville, confirmed she is well. Aung Shwe suggested unconfirmed media reports that ASSK had been placed on an IV were mere speculation based on the fact that her doctor, Douglas, met with her for a long period (four hours) September 14.

13. (C) Aung Shwe told the Charge that party leaders have not yet been in touch with Douglas since the 14th. Aung Shwe said "confidentially" that Douglas is the NLD conduit to and from ASSK for political issues. He noted that Douglas and NLD leaders are being secretive about communicating with one another to avoid the appearance of colluding.

14. (C) When asked why the GOB appears to have eased restrictions on ASSK's house arrest (Ref A), Aung Shwe surmised that the regime is worried about the instability that would result if she were to die. Regarding her pending appeal, Nyunt Wai was pessimistic, noting that her detention without trial would not be handled properly as a judicial matter and that her lawyer would continue to face logistical obstacles, such as securing GOB documents, to move forward with the appeal.

15. (C) CDA informed NLD leaders that in his meeting with FM Nyan Win (Ref B), he had stressed the need to release ASSK and other political prisoners, the need to cease human rights violations, and the importance of undertaking a constructive dialogue.

THIS CONSTITUTION UNACCEPTABLE

16. (C) Aung Shwe responded to questions about the NLD's plans for the 2010 elections by saying the current

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constitution is unacceptable to the party. He said the NLD could not formally announce a stance regarding the elections until electoral laws, including the political party registration law, are issued. He disagreed with other groups that are planning to participate in the elections, saying he does not understand how they could choose such a course with an undemocratic constitution that guarantees 25 percent of seats for the military. Nyunt Wai suggested the NLD may soon propose an alternative course that could "save face" for all sides. He vaguely indicated that a mechanism similar to that utilized in the May referendum might be the solution. He declined to provide details, including how the new mechanism would avoid the sorts of manipulation of results witnessed in May.

CRITICAL OF GAMBARI; WELCOMING A VISIT BY SYG BAN

17. (C) Nyunt Wai expressed the NLD's dissatisfaction with the Gambari mission, saying that Gambari has achieved nothing despite six visits to Burma. He praised ASSK's decision to refuse a meeting during Gambari's last visit. The Uncles stressed the need for the UN to clarify its position on the 2010 elections, since Gambari has begun discussing technical assistance for the elections even as the NLD and others have made clear they do not recognize the legitimacy of the constitution. Nyunt Wai criticized Liaison Minister Aung Kyi as not being a decision maker, but said he expects ASSK to meet with the Minister soon.

18. (C) Aung Shwe said he would welcome a visit by SYG Ban, even without pre-conditions, since the SYG's visit in May following Cyclone Nargis appeared to bring results. Aung Shwe noted that he has long urged raising international efforts on Burma to a considerably higher level, and a SYG visit to discuss political issues would fit the bill. Nyunt Wai said if the SYG comes, all sides must agree that the current constitution is not acceptable, and the UN would have to tell the SPDC to compromise.

¶9. (C) NLD leaders expressed appreciation for scholarships to permit NLD students to take English and professional development courses at the American Center; however, they reiterated concern about new application procedures and a reported new rule that would limit scholarships to one year of study. Charge explained that new procedures are intended to ensure the limited number of scholarship allocations are transparent and equitable, based on merit and need. He noted that, in the end, we expect scholarship numbers for NLD beneficiaries will be consistent with past practices. (NOTE: The NLD has traditionally received approximately one quarter of the 40-50 total annual scholarships. END NOTE.) The NLD leaders said they had been considering a boycott of the new application process; but transparency and equity are important. They agreed to give the new process a try. NLD students will submit applications ASAP in anticipation of upcoming placement tests.

10.(C) BIO NOTE: Aung Shwe, a former brigadier general until he retired from the military in 1961, told us Senior General Than Shwe had been under his command briefly in Karen State, sometime around 1956 when Aung Shwe was a colonel and Than Shwe was a lieutenant. Aung Shwe said he has no detailed recollection of their interactions.

Comment

¶11. (C) The two uncles present, while undoubtedly elderly, were alert and engaged throughout the useful discussion. As noted reftel C, as the meeting ended Nyunt Wai took Charge aside to whisper: "Watch out next week," suggesting dissident elements will undertake some sort of activity to commemorate

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last year's Saffron Revolution crackdown.
DINGER